



# MINUTES

## OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Regular Meeting

### July 18, 2023

#### MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. John Elliott, District I  
Mr. Matthew Durham, Chairman, District II  
Mr. Don Mize, Vice Chairman, District III  
Mr. Julian Davis III, District IV  
Mr. Glenn Hart, Chairman Pro Tem, District V

Oconee County Council met at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members, County Administrator Amanda F. Brock, County Attorney David Root, & Jennifer C. Adams, Clerk to Council present.

**Press:** Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [[www.oconeesc.com/council](http://www.oconeesc.com/council)]. In addition, it was made available [*upon request*] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Members of the press present: Riley Morningstar / The Journal

#### **Call to Order**

Mr. Durham called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

#### **Moment of Silence**

Mr. Durham asked for a moment of silence prior to the Invocation by County Council Chaplain.

#### **Invocation by County Council Chaplain**

Mr. Root, County Council Chaplain, gave the invocation.

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Scott Krein led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 - 0, to approve the June 20, 2023 regular meeting minutes as presented.

Mr. Mize made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5- 0, to approve the June 23, 2023 special meeting minutes as presented.

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## **Attorney's Comments**

Mr. Root informed Council and the public that a questionnaire for the District I seat on the Aeronautics Commission was received today and will be in consideration of appointment this evening, then went on to provide details related to **Ordinance 2023-12**, noting that Project Iron Man was revealed to be Itron.

## **Administrator's Comments**

Ms. Brock noted to Council that at the last meeting she was mistaken as to the age of the grinder at the landfill when she stated it was eight years old, and that it is actually fifteen years old.

## **Public Comment Session**

*If you are not able to attend in person and you have a comment, you may submit it by contacting our Clerk to Council, Jennifer C. Adams at [jennifercadams@oconeesc.com](mailto:jennifercadams@oconeesc.com) or 864-718-1023, so that she may receive your comment and read it into the record.*

1. Mr. Roger Norwood addressed Council with his opinion that Oconee County does not offer adequate services for special needs children, then went on to express his opinions related to the budget, Council member conduct, County employee raises and social media accounts.
2. Ms. Terri Baumann addressed Council with her concerns related to the water lines, sewer lines and road conditions in the neighborhood of Port Santorini.
3. Ms. Katey Whitesel addressed Council with her concerns related to the water lines, sewer lines and road conditions in the neighborhood of Port Santorini.

## **Council Members Comments**

Mr. Elliott made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, to instruct County Administration include first reading of a budget amendment, increasing the budget by \$2.5 million dollars as a separate line item labeled "Salary Study Implementation", on the next Council meeting agenda in August.

Ms. Brock noted that Administration is about 80% complete with the budget amendment, stating that budget review has been gone through department by department to address any contractual matters, including those that will not renew until later in the year, are included so that only one budget amendment is needed.

Ms. Brock stated to Council that she will have first reading of the budget amendment on the August 15, 2023 Council meeting agenda.

Mr. Durham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to amend the originally stated motion to remove the monetary amount requirement until Finance and Administration have completed the amendment.

Ms. Brock informed Council that the Salary and Wage Study has gone out to bid.

Mrs. Tronda Popham, Procurement Director, provided a timeline to Council regarding the Salary and Wage Study bid process.

Motion to amend the original motion approved 5 – 0.

Amended motion approved 5 – 0.

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Mr. Hart inquired about the progression of the pay scale for those employees whose salaries are less than \$45,000.00.

Ms. Brock noted the pay scale will be included in the budget amendment to be presented at the August 15, 2023 Council meeting.

Mr. Davis addressed the citizen concerns related to conditions of the water/sewer lines and roads in Port Santorini.

Mr. Hart acknowledged that he received the email related to problems in Port Santorini and noted he forwarded these emails to The Journal.

Mr. Durham addressed the citizen concerns related to condition of the water/sewer lines and roads in Port Santorini and asked Ms. Brock to reach out to City of Seneca Administrator, Mr. Scott Moulder, to start discussion related to Port Santorini concerns and report back to Council or Transportation Committee.

Mr Durham then encouraged Ms. Baumann to reach out to State Delegation with her concerns.

Ms. Baumann then approached the podium and noted to Council that she was advised by State Delegation to reach out to County Council and the City of Seneca with her concerns because there was no funding available for her request from the state.

**Public Hearings for the Following Ordinances** *If you would like to be heard during either of the public hearings, please contact Clerk to Council Jennifer C. Adams at [jennifercadams@oconeesc.com](mailto:jennifercadams@oconeesc.com) or 864-718-1023 so that your participation by may be coordinated.*

**ORDINANCE 2023-12** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING, PURSUANT TO TITLE 12, CHAPTER 44 OF THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA 1976, AS AMENDED, THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A FEE-IN-LIEU OF AD VALOREM TAXES AND SPECIAL SOURCE REVENUE CREDIT AGREEMENT BY AND BETWEEN OCONEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, AND PROJECT IRON MAN, ACTING FOR ITSELF, ONE OR MORE CURRENT OR FUTURE AFFILIATES AND OTHER PROJECT COMPANIES (COLLECTIVELY, “COMPANY”); PROVIDING FOR A FEE-IN-LIEU OF AD VALOREM TAXES INCENTIVE; PROVIDING FOR A SPECIAL SOURCE REVENUE CREDIT; DEVELOPING A JOINT COUNTY INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS PARK BETWEEN OCONEE COUNTY AND PICKENS COUNTY SO AS TO DESIGNATE THE PROPERTY OF THE PROJECT AS PART OF THE PARK; AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS.

Mr. Durham opened the floor for Public Comment.

Noting that no citizens signed up to address Council; Mr. Durham opened the floor for any citizen wishing to address Council regarding this ordinance. No citizen addressed Council and no citizen submitted or presented any written comments for the record.

Mr. Durham closed the Public Hearing regarding **Ordinance 2023-12**.

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**ORDINANCE 2023-13** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS, IN ONE OR MORE SERIES, TAX-EXEMPT OR TAXABLE, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$25,000,000 FOR THE PURPOSE OF DESIGNING, ACQUIRING, CONSTRUCTING, INSTALLING, EQUIPPING, OR REHABILITATING VARIOUS CAPITAL PROJECTS, INCLUDING WASTEWATER IMPROVEMENTS AND RELATED EQUIPMENT; AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO PRESCRIBE THE FORM AND DETAILS OF THE BONDS; PROVIDING FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE BONDS AND THE DISPOSITION OF THE PROCEEDS OF THE BONDS; PROVIDING FOR BORROWING IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF THE BONDS; AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS.

*(This is a preliminary public hearing for the above-captioned ordinance. The statutorily-required public hearing will be held at a future date, the notice of which will be published in advance of that hearing.)*

Mr. Durham opened the floor for Public Comment.

Noting that no citizens signed up to address Council; Mr. Durham opened the floor for any citizen wishing to address Council regarding this ordinance.

Mr. Tom Markovich addressed Council and expressed his full support of sewer expansion but voiced his concern that the County has no voice or vote on the Sewer Commission.

Mr. Durham closed the Public Hearing regarding **Ordinance 2023-13**.

### **Third Reading of the Following Ordinances**

**ORDINANCE 2023-12** *[see caption above]*

Mr. Elliott made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve **Ordinance 2023-12** on third and final reading.

Council members then extended thanks to Itron for choosing Oconee County for their plant expansion.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

### **Second Reading of the Following Ordinances**

None for this meeting.

### **First Reading of the Following Ordinances**

**ORDINANCE 2023-13** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS, IN ONE OR MORE SERIES, TAX-EXEMPT OR TAXABLE, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$25,000,000 FOR THE PURPOSE OF DESIGNING, ACQUIRING, CONSTRUCTING, INSTALLING, EQUIPPING, OR REHABILITATING VARIOUS CAPITAL PROJECTS, INCLUDING WASTEWATER IMPROVEMENTS AND RELATED EQUIPMENT; AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO PRESCRIBE THE FORM AND DETAILS OF THE BONDS; PROVIDING FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE BONDS AND THE

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DISPOSITION OF THE PROCEEDS OF THE BONDS; PROVIDING FOR BORROWING IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF THE BONDS; AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS.

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mize, approved 5 – 0, to approve **Ordinance 2023-13** on first reading.

**First and Final Reading for the Following Resolutions**

None for this meeting.

**Discussion Regarding Action Items**

***Discussion and consideration of Brush Grinding Options at the C&D Landfill.***

Ms. Brock provided details regarding the brush grinder at the landfill, noting they have yet to receive the needed part to make repairs and went on to request Council permission to solicit invitation for third party grinder services, to include a stand-by contract in the event grinding services should be needed in the future.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to approve invitation of a third party to perform grinding services at the landfill, to include a stand-by contract in the event grinding services should be needed in the future, as requested.

Ms. Brock informed Council that the cost for third party grinder services could range anywhere from \$3000.00 to \$10,000.00 per day but noted requests for grinding would be specific to current needs at the landfill.

Mr. Swain Still, Solid Waste Director, noted to Council that Solid Waste is currently under compliance with DHEC by moving excess brush into the landfill, which is allowable.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

***Discuss Grant and Performance Agreements (“Agreements”) benefiting Akasol, Inc. / Project EVPack-Oconee, and authorize the County Administrator and County Council Chair to execute and deliver the Agreements on behalf of Oconee County.***

Mr. Jamie Gilbert, Oconee Economic Alliance Director, provided background information to Council for the reasoning behind the above request, noting these grant and performance agreements are for the Borg Warner facility expansion in Seneca and noted that no County funds are involved.

Mr. Durham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0, to approve Grant and Performance Agreements (“Agreements”) benefiting Akasol, Inc. / Project EVPack-Oconee, and authorize the County Administrator and County Council Chair to execute and deliver the Agreements on behalf of Oconee County.

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***Discussion and consideration of lifting a portion of the hiring freeze to meet demands and address critical needs in Oconee County.***

Mr. Durham made note of the late submission of data related to this request and for future requests related to the hiring freeze, all data would need to be submitted by the time the agenda is finalized or the request would not be included.

Ms. Brock expressed to Council her opinion that all submitted data from PRT, Solid Waste, Building Codes, Vehicle Maintenance, Roads and Bridges and the Library system supports their requests to lift the hiring freeze for their specific department.

Mr. Durham expressed his support of Ms. Brock's recommendation to lift the hiring freeze for the above listed departments.

Mr. Durham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to lift the hiring freeze as requested by the Oconee County Library System, PRT, Solid Waste Department, Building Codes, Vehicle Maintenance Department and Roads and Bridges Department, as well as any departmental vacancies that occurred after June 6, 2023.

Ms. Brock provided additional details to Council regarding their questions related to the above request.

Mr. Davis shared his opinion related to the issuance of the hiring freeze but noted he is in support of the above motion and extended his thanks to all employees that continue to perform their jobs.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

**Consideration of approval to place the Walhalla Middle School Resource Officer under the supervision of the Sheriff as an employee of Oconee County.**

There are currently eighteen (18) school resource officers in Oconee County, seventeen (17) currently work for the Sheriff's Office, while one (1) works for the Walhalla Police Department. The Walhalla City Officer is retiring. The Walhalla City Police Chief, the Sheriff and the School District have been in agreement that when the Walhalla City officer retires, the replacement would be a Sheriff's Deputy.

Salary and fringe benefits for this position are compensated by the School District. The only cost to Oconee County will be the needed equipment for the Deputy, along with a vehicle. In addition to the salary and fringe benefits, the School District has agreed to reimburse the Sheriff's Office up to \$20,000 to go toward the first-year cost for equipment and a vehicle.

**The Sheriff's Office will need \$17,150.00 to pay for the remainder of the first-year cost associated with this position.**

***It is staff's recommendation replace the Walhalla Middle School Resource Officer position with a Sheriff's Deputy. This will ensure continuity with policies, procedures and training with all school resource officers in Oconee County.***

Ms. Brock provide Council with background information related to the above request.

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Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mize, approved 5 – 0, to replace the Walhalla Middle School Resource Officer position with an Oconee County Sheriff's Deputy.

**Request for Council's consideration to support the Oconee County application for the South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism "Undiscovered SC" grant and approval to commit matching funds, not to exceed \$50,000, for the further development of the Foothills Farmstead.**

**Amount: Not to exceed \$50,000**

- On October 10, 2019, Oconee County entered into a Ground Lease Agreement with the Foothills Farmstead for property designated as "Lease Parcel 2" on the survey by Stephen R. Edwards. On June 06, 2023, Oconee County Council voted to add Tract I as additional property to allow for further expansion of the historical farmstead and related facilities.
- The Foothills Farmstead is requesting funds for further development of the Foothills Farmstead site, including the assembly of a 1920s schoolhouse, the rebuilding of three large, working fireplaces and chimneys on the main farmhouse, the installation of a pre-fabricated restroom facility and clearing/paving for the development of an access area and parking.
- South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism "Undiscovered SC" is accepting grant applications until July 23, 2023.
- A "Letter of Intent" has been submitted and approved by SCPRT for a request from the Foothills Farmstead in the amount of \$50,000.
- It is a 1:1 matching grant.
- If approved, the grant money would be financially managed/lead applicant by Oconee County, with Foothills Farmstead as the Project Management. Bring the recipient of SCPRT funds.
- The SCPRT grant is a reimbursing grant, if award, Oconee County would be reimbursed for spent funds as often as monthly, up to \$50,000 total with required reimbursable documentation to SCPRT.

**The balance of funding needed for the grant would come from the Capital Projects Fund and would not exceed \$50,000.**

**The allocation of funds is contingent on the award from the SCPRT "Undiscovered SC" grant.**

*It is the staff's recommendation that Council support Undiscovered SC grant application for the purpose of further developing the Foothills Farmstead historical site, and approve the commitment for matching funds, if awarded.*

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to approve Council support of the Undiscovered SC grant application for the purpose of further developing the Foothills Farmstead historical site, and approve the commitment for matching funds, if awarded.

Mr. Nick Gambrell, Foothills Farmstead Director, addressed Council and provided details related to the grant and the development of Foothills Farmstead.

Short discussion between Mr. Gambrell, Ms. Brock and Council followed.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

## **Council Committee Reports**

None for this meeting.

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## **Board & Commission Appointments**

### **Aeronautics Commission**

District I: One questionnaire on file for this seat

Mr. Elliott made a nomination, approved 5 – 0, to appoint Mr. Albert Brightwell, whose questionnaire was received today, as the District I representative on the Aeronautics Commission.

### **Agricultural Advisory Board**

District IV: No questionnaires on file for this seat

### **Board of Zoning Appeals**

District IV: 1 questionnaire on file for this seat

Mr. Davis made a nomination, approved 5 – 0, to appoint Mr. Thomas James as the District IV representative on the Board of Zoning Appeals.

## **Executive Session:**

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0, to enter into Executive Sessions for the following purposes, as allowed for § 30-4-70(a) of the South Carolina Code of Laws:

1. *Discuss personnel matter – County Attorney.*
2. *Receive legal advice and discuss ongoing litigation – King v. Oconee County, et al.*
3. *Discussion regarding an Economic Development matter, Project Galt.*

Council entered into Executive Session at 7:22 p.m.

Council returned from Executive Session at 8:02 p.m. on a motion made by Mr. Hart, seconded by Mr. Davis, approved 5 – 0.

No action was taken in Executive Session.

## **Adjourn:**

Mr. Hart made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Jennifer C. Adams  
Clerk to Council

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